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A-123 NO. SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM

TO : Department of State

EO 11652: XGDS 2

TAGS: PINS, GT

FROM : Amembassy GUATEMALA

DATE: July 12, 1974

SUBJECT: INTERNAL SECURITY: Monthly Report of Incidents, June 1974

REF:

SECRET

SUMMARY: The last month of the Arana administration was a relatively peaceful one in which the level of political violence was low and there were prominent victims. The June total of 41 incidents of a possible political nature was the lowest monthly total in a year. The inauguration of new mayors throughout the country on June 15 provoked several incidents, but the level of violence was well below the level of discontent. An unsuccessful bombing attempt against the Nicaraguan Consulate may also have been intended as a protest against election fraud. Other major incidents this month included the wounding of a PID-leader in Quezaltenango, the kidnapping of a campesino league leader in Coatepeque, the assassination of a university student with reported FAR connections.

Five tortured bodies were found in a municipality of Suchitepéquez. President Laugerud has repeatedly expressed his intention to fight both rightist and leftist terrorism. The new Minister of Government, a career military officer, has taken a strong stand against the use of torture by the police and begun a new "depistolization" campaign. In the light of Guatemala's bloody history, all of these hopeful signs must be viewed initially with some skepticism. The Embassy's monthly internal security reports will be one gauge of the effectiveness of Laugerud's good intentions as well as of the reaction of the Left. END SUMMARY.

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FORM DS-323

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Contents and Classification Approved by:

POL:WTP/VCS

Clearances:

POL-1:WThomas

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

REVIEWED BY *Car* DATE *Oct 1974*

PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

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I. Statistics: The last month of the Arana administration was a relatively peaceful one in which the level of political violence was low and there were no prominent victims. The June total of 41 press-reported incidents of a possible political nature was the lowest monthly total in a year and continued the 1974 pattern of sharp monthly fluctuations (see attached graph). However, the monthly average for the first half of 1974 -- 57 -- has remained close to the 1973 monthly average (54). The number of attributed incidents also dropped this month, with the press charging only three incidents (7%) to the Government security forces and three (7%) to the leftist subversive groups. Incidents included nine kidnappings and sixteen assassinations, five with reported signs of torture. Victims this month included four campesinos, a campesino league leader, two businessmen, two military commissioners, two taxi-drivers, a private policeman, a university student, a municipal employee in Chimaltenango, and an Escuintla municipal employee who was active in the FURE. For the second month in succession, the South Coast had by far the highest number of incidents (19), including seven in Suchitepéquez and four in Escuintla.

II. Incidents Provoked by Mayoral Inaugurations: The inauguration of 308 new mayors on June 15 provoked several incidents, but in general the level of violence was well below the level of discontent. Victims included members of all political parties and in some cases personal as well as political differences apparently motivated the actions. On the day following the inaugurations, a bomb exploded in the doorway of the home of the new mayor of Samayac, Suchitepéquez; and in nearby Santa Cruz Mulca, Retalhuleu, the new mayor was severely beaten by an unidentified group of men. In the latter case, the new mayor, who had been the DCG candidate, speculated that his attackers may have been elements disgruntled with the victory of an Indian. Another Indian mayor, in San Pablo La Laguna, a PR member, also was beaten by men who allegedly warned him to resign. In Escuintla, Communist Youth Group (JPT) leaflets condemning election fraud were found in the streets on the morning of June 15.

III. Attack Against Planning Council Director: On the morning of June 15, unidentified assailants fired on Economic Planning Council Secretary-General Gert Rosenthal as he was driving to work on the Avenida de las Americas. According to Rosenthal's deputy, Federico Fahsen, and others, one bullet entered the car's window and lodged in the headrest while another bounced off the steering column. The incident was a closely held secret until scooped by the sensationalist newspaper Impacto on June 21.

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Although Rosenthal was unharmed in the attack, whoever was responsible for it precipitated his decision to leave the country. Rosenthal has decided to accept an offer to head the U.N.'s Latin American Economic Planning Council (CEPAL) office in Mexico. Fashen told us that General Laugerud, then President-elect, met with Rosenthal three days following the incident and attempted unsuccessfully to persuade him to remain on as head of the Planning Council.

Comment:

[REDACTED]

End Comment.

IV. Bomb at Nicaraguan Consulate: On the night of June 13 a Guatemalan policeman assigned to guard the Nicaraguan Consulate here discovered in the Consulate's garage a time bomb made out of ten sticks of dynamite. Police explosives experts dismantled the device, reportedly three hours before it was set to explode. The incident inspired a rash of press rumors that subversive elements planned a massive campaign against local diplomatic missions. The police promptly denied that they had information of any such planned campaign. The Embassy has no information which would indicate that the press stories are anything more than pure speculation. The Nicaraguans probably were targetted because of the belief by the Guatemalan Left that Nicaraguan strongman Anastasio Somoza was personally involved in the election fraud in March.

V. New Dumping Ground: Five unidentified bodies were found this month in Rio Bravo, Suchitepéquez, all shot and with reported signs of torture. In May, three bodies were found in similar conditions in the same area, including two bearing notes from the Escuadron de la Muerte. The number of bodies and the manner in which they were slain suggest Government involvement.

The Death Squad only took credit for one victim this month, found in Jutiapa on June 3, thereby bringing to 27 the group's toll since February.

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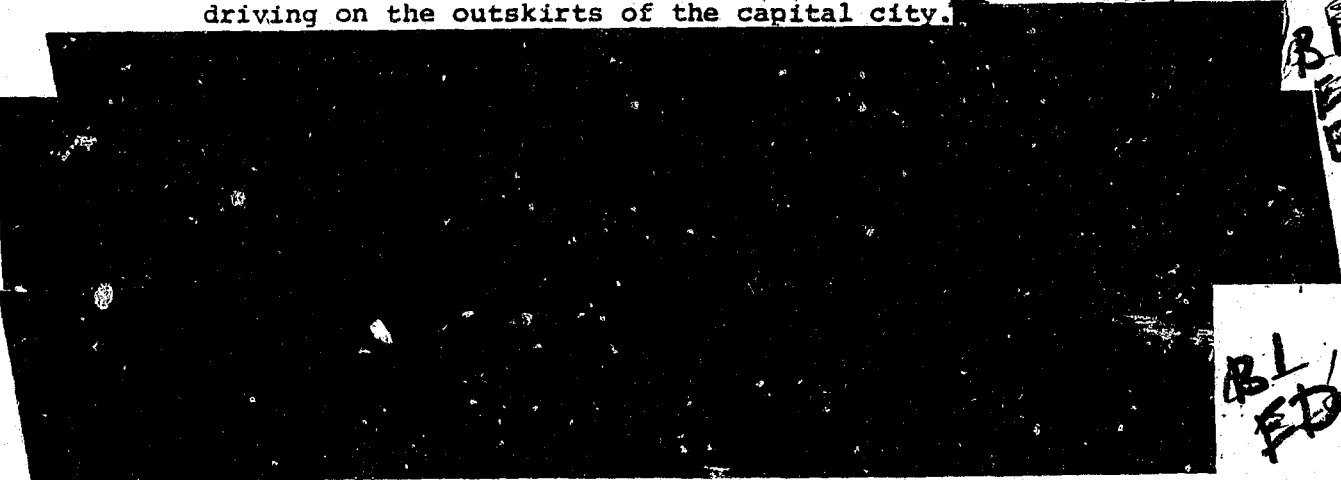
VI. Other Major Incidents:

Probably Done by the Left: In Quezaltenango, a local PID leader was seriously wounded on June 3 by unknown assailants who shot at him from a car. This incident followed several similar attacks against Coalition elements which have occurred in Quezaltenango since the elections. Prior to that time Quezaltenango had been one of Guatemala's most peaceful towns. Jorge Jimenez Cajas, a Quezaltenango FURD leader who lost a seat in Congress because of a legal technicality, has publicly denounced the departmental Governor for accusing him of responsibility for the incidents.

By the Right: In the more traditionally violence-prone town of Coatepeque, Quezaltenango, the leader of the campesino league, of nearby Parcelamiento La Blanca was kidnapped at noon on June 20 in the central square. FASGUA, the Communist-controlled labor federation, has accused National Police detectives of carrying out the abduction.


the assassination on June 27 of Alvaro Tejada Lopez, a San Carlos University student with reported FAR connections. Tejada was shot directly in front of the Treasury Police headquarters in Guatemala City. The victim's father, Juan Jose Tejada Barrientos, was a prominent Congressional Deputy during the Arevalo and Arbenz regimes.

In the most bizarre incident this month, on June 9 three men were wounded and one killed by attackers who fired at them while driving on the outskirts of the capital city.



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VII. Good Intentions: In a statement possibly prompted by the Rosenthal incident (Item III), General Laugerud commented to the press on June 19 that his Government would fight terrorism, whether it originated from the Right or the Left. In his Inauguration Day press conference, the new President stated that he would disarm both rightist and leftist paramilitary groups.

Laugerud's nomination of General Leonel Vassaux, a career military officer, to replace MLN leader Roberto Herrera as Minister of Government has been interpreted as a sign that the new President may seriously intend to reduce the level of political violence in the country.

[REDACTED] In one of his first acts as Minister, Vassaux sent a telegram to the directors general of the police and the prison system reminding them of constitutional prohibitions against the use of "physical or moral torture." Vassaux told the two subordinates that any police officials who carried out or permitted the use of torture would be immediately fired and placed in the hands of the courts. On July 6 the police began to carry out a large-scale program of "depistolization" in the capital city.

Another positive step to lower the level of violence has been taken by the new President of Congress, Luis Alfonso Lopez, who has reduced the size of the congressional security force.

Comment: All of these hopeful signs must be viewed initially with some skepticism. Guatemala had many unsuccessful "depistolization" campaigns under Arana. [REDACTED] another career military [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Some armed groups will remain outside of Laugerud's direct control, including Vice President Sandoval's corps of bodyguards and ex-President Arana's personal security force at his home in Chiquimula. Any attempt by President Laugerud to control the activities of these paramilitary groups could be at the price of a serious political confrontation. Future activities of the Government security forces as well as of the "illegal" paramilitary outfits also will depend on the courses of action followed by the PGT and, to a lesser extent, by the Christian Democrats. The strategies of both of these leftist

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organizations could be affected by the outcome of current internal leadership struggles. During the coming months, the Embassy's monthly internal security reports will be one gauge of the effectiveness of Laugerud's good intentions as well as of the reactions of the Left.

Meloy
fsl

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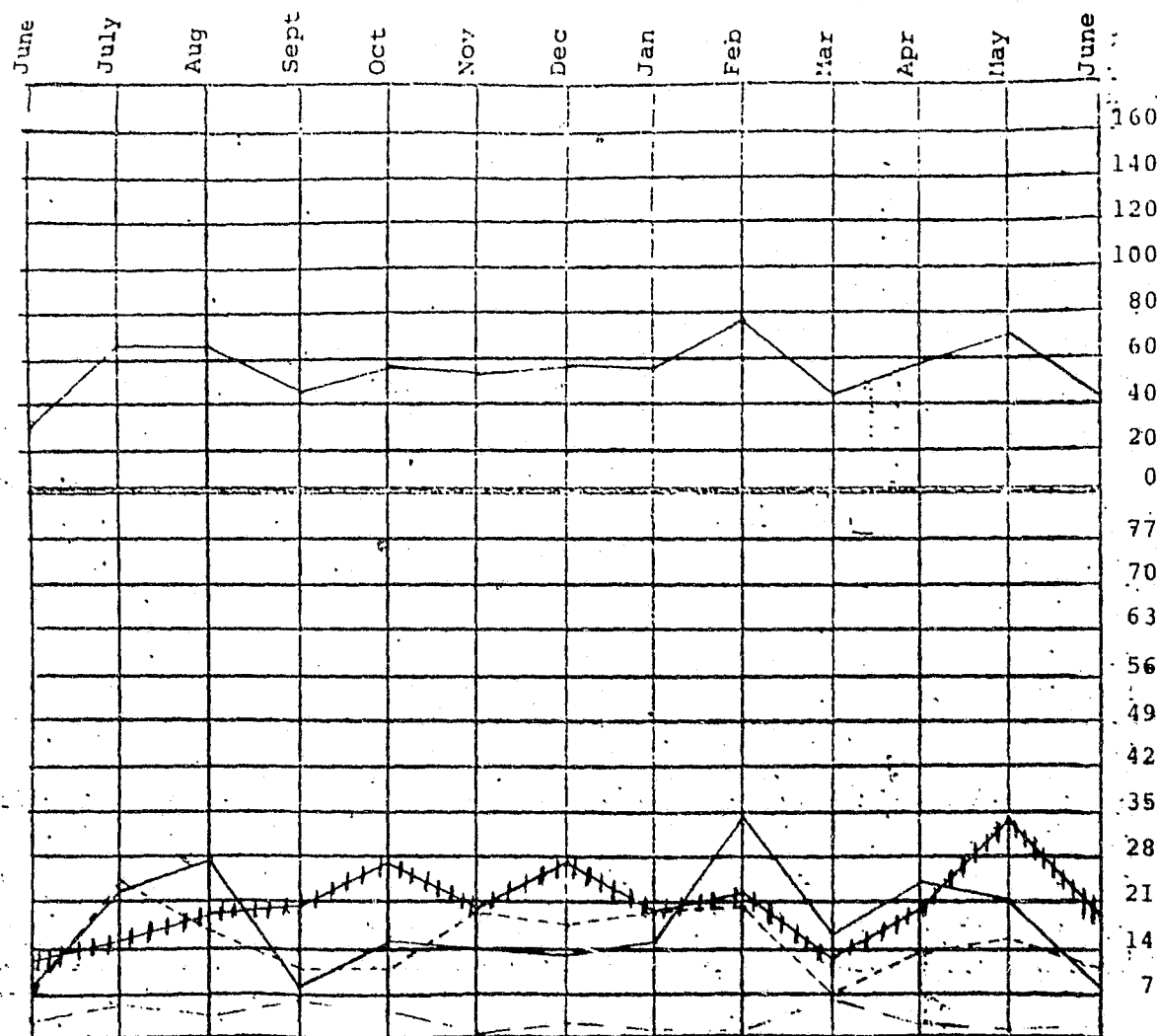
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Enclosure

MONTHLY OCCURRENCE OF POLITICAL INCIDENTS BY REGION - JUNE 1973 - JUNE 1974



TOTAL 41

For purposes of this graph, acts of violence include shootings, bombings, and deaths, all of which appear to be politically motivated.

- Capital area - Sacatepequez, Guatemala
- South Coast - San Marcos, Quezaltenango, Retalhuleu, Suchitepequez, Escuintla, Santa Rosa
- Eastern Region - Jutiapa, El Progreso, Jalapa, Zacapa, Chiquimula, Izabal, El Peten
- Highlands - Totonicapan, Chimaltenango, Huehuetenango, El Quiche, Baja Verapaz, Alta Verapaz, Solola